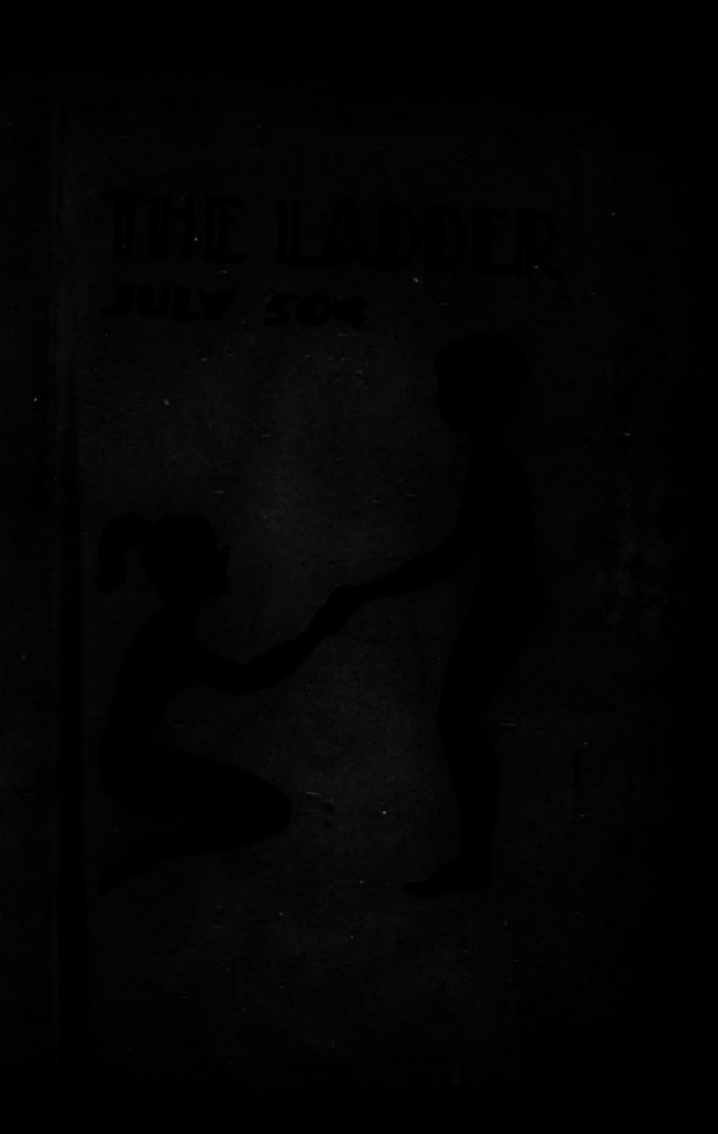
THE LADDER
JULY 1908

the Ladder

JULY, 1961
VOLUME 5, NUMBER 10

Published monthly by the Daughters of Bilitis, Inc., a non-profit corporation, 1232 Market Street, Suite 108, San Francisco 2, California. Telephone: UNderhill 3 - 8196.

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First Love

A Story by Agatha Mathys

It wasn't easy. First love never is. The stumbling-in-the-dark of uncertainty, the held-breath of anticipation - these are difficult things. I met her in a very ordinary way. So ordinary that the exact moment of meeting (the one that should be a bright flash in the mottled sky of memory) - that moment I have forgotten. She was there, and I loved her.

I must have met her in Miss Lee's suite. Because of my job, I had my own key to the front door of the dorm and special permission to come in after hours. One night Miss Lee asked me into her suite.

"Jenny, I've made coffee. Won't you have some with us?"

I don't know whether Chris was there the first night or not. There were other girls there, four or five. It was the beginning of a ritual. Later, I remember the three of us: Miss Lee bundled in a bright green robe, with her hair in a turban; Chris just out of the shower, pajamas showing under the red plaid of her robe; and me, home from work, no longer tired, full of stories about things that had happened at the switchboard.

One night we discussed, briefly, homosexuality. I'm not sure, but I think Chris introduced the subject, saying something about a book she'd read. I kept very, very quiet.

Someone else said, "Oh, I've known a fairy or two," and tittered.

I stirred my coffee--the coffee that didn't need stirring because I drank it black.

"When I was an undergraduate," Miss Lee began. She had been looking at Chris, and she paused and looked away. "When I was an undergraduate, a girl friend and I were in-

vited to a housepartyy one weekend. We didn't know it, but all the other girls were Lesbians."

"Lesbians?" Chris asked.

"That's what female homosexuals are sometimes called."

"What happened?"

Miss Lee laughed. "Nothing much. We discovered our mutual error and were very uncomfortable for a while. My friend and I left soon after - which made everyone feel better."

Chris again. "But - but what happened? To the other girls?"

"Why, I suppose they went on with their party."

"But what did they do?"

Miss Lee looked straight at Chris. "If you mean - how do Lesbians entertain each other - I don't know. I've never had any first-hand experience. It doesn't require too much imagination, though."

We finished our coffee and left.

I was a step ahead of Chris on the stairs, and she caught my hand. Lightly she held it, and nothing could have pried me from her touch. "Do you believe that?"

I didn't turn around. "Believe what?"

She came and stood beside me on the stair. "That girls can love each other."

Believe it? For a long time I had been aware that the only time of day that meant anything was the time spent in Miss Lee's suite - sitting across from Chris. This I knew. More than this I could not imagine - or fathom.

And so I said, "No. Do you?"

She dropped my hand. "I don't know. Maybe. Goodnight, Jenny."

She climbed past me on the stairs and went directly to her room. I stood there for a moment, head down. The green fire exit signs gave my hand and arm a strange, sick color.

That night I lay awake for a long time. Why hadn't I said, "Yes, yes, I believe that two girls can love each other"? What would have happened then? The question Chris had asked in Miss Lee's suite echoed and reechoed in my sleeplessness: "But what did they do?"

Had I betrayed our friendship by not answering her truthfully? I had answered truthfully! Friendship is a rare and beautiful thing, and we had this rare and beautiful thing between us. Love, even, maybe. There are all kinds of love. But not what Miss Lee was talking about. Not...

But what did they do?

The next night I hurried to my own room without stopping in Miss Lee's suite. My roommate was asleep, and only the study lamp on her desk was on. I lay down on my bunk. What was I to do?

Chris was leaning over the bed before I realized anyone had come into the room.

She smiled, her own, special slow smile that I didn't need light to see. "I missed you, Jenny."

She bent and kissed me full on the mouth. Then, as quickly as she had come, she was gone.

It was a quick kiss, a light kiss; but neither so quick nor so light that I wasn't aware of the desire that had welled up within me- sudden, unmistakable. Chris, Chris.

But she's a girl! I sat up on the bunk, my hands in fists. My God. She's a girl.

I lay down after a while, and even, finally went to sleep. My last thought was- Please. Please let her have meant it when she kissed me.

We were only infrequently in Miss Lee's suite after that, although Chris always waited for me to get home from work.

Sometimes we listened to records in the lounge, sometimes I read poetry to her by candlelight. Sometimes she rubbed my back, "This will help you to relax." My whole body ached with wanting her hands to smooth over the boundaries set by back-rubbing.

April came. Warm, love-April. And, with it, came my vacation from the telephone company.

The bittersweet hours of those two weeks-studying together at a deserted part of the stone quarry, sunbathing on the dorm roof, eating in a tiny restaurant in town. We talked about our families, school, our dreams- we talked about everything except the two of us together. Sometimes we didn't talk at all. Sometimes we held hands without talking. And these times were the best, and the worst, of all.

For the first time I began to see Chris in relation to other people. She was the most popular girl in the dorm, had already been chosen next year's president, and stood a good chance of being elected to an office of the all-college council. Her manners were impeccable, her clothes superb. Sometimes I was jealous of the other people. They took time and attention I wanted for myself.

The night of the junior prom we were given special late hours. I wasn't going. I had almost stopped dating entirely. I supposed that Chris was going- it was one of the biggest events of the year. I hadn't been able to ask her if she were, just as I couldn't bear talking to her about any of the boys she dated.

She was waiting in my room when I got back from class. "This is the last weekend of your vacation, isn't it, Jenny?"

"Uh-huh. It's going to be very hard to go back to work."

"We ought to have one last fling, don't you think?"

I could hardly trust myself to answer. "Like what?"

"All the things you like. Dinner downtown. Daiquiris. Rare steak, you cannibal. Cointreau. And there's sup-

posed to be a moon. We could go for a ride. Would you like that, Jenny? It's your party."

"But the prom. What about the prom?"

Chris laughed. "How could I go to a prom on the last Saturday of your vacation? Best bib and tucker at seven sharp."

It was my party. After dinner, Chris drove to a lonely spot near the stone quarry. Over the years, the quarry had filled with water, and the moon that Chris had promised left a path of light on its surface.

She took my hand and held it even while she spread the blanket she'd brought from the car. We sat very quietly for a while and watched the moon. All of a sudden, Chris' arms were around me and her mouth, her hands were answering that haunting question: But what did they do?

We stayed there, in the moonlight, for a long time. Finally, Chris said, "Baby, it's late. We'd better get back to the dorm."

Baby. Lover. Chris, Chris. The sky opened for me. You made the sky open.

She'd said it was late. For me, it was much later than I knew.

Back at the dorm Chris asked, "You love me, don't you?"

"Yes. Oh, yes. I love you." Never had there been such a glorious release as this. The words were whispered; I wanted to shout. The soft-hardness of you, Chris-the smoothness of your cheek, the infinite gentleness of your hands. I love you, I love you.

Chris didn't say the words I wanted to hear, She squeezed my hand and went to her own room. And I thought, we don't need words, you and I. I know you love me. Chris, Chris.

How well I slept- for the first time in weeks- and awoke feeling all new. It was Sunday-gray and raining- a beautiful day. I could hardly dress fast enough. We'd

have breakfast together, read the papers together, study together. Together, together, together. Song of love.

Chris was still in bed. Her sleepy "Yes?" in answer to my knock was far away, impersonal.

"It's me. Jenny."

"Oh. Come in."

I laughed. "The door's locked! "

She opened the door and got back in bed. I stood in the doorway, all arms and legs.

"Why don't you come in?" She started to reach for her cigarettes, and I handed them to her, closing the door behind me.

"Good morning."

She looked at me, then, for the first time. "Good morning, Jenny."

I wanted to touch her- her face, her throat, touch her anywhere. I stood there woodenly. Only my voice was alive. "How are you this morning?"

"Rotten. Headache. Hangover, I guess. Why don't you sit down? Cigarette?"

She lighted both our cigarettes and sank back into her pillow. "Eaten?"

"No. I was waiting for you. I thought..."

"Think I'll skip breakfast today, Jenny. Why don't you go ahead? They'll be closing the dining hall soon."

I put my hand on her arm. "I don't want to eat without you. Maybe if you ate something..."

"The thought of food sickens me."

It was beginning to sicken me, too. "Chris, what's wrong?"

"I told you. I don't feel good." She sat up a little. I'll feel better later, Jenny. Why don't you come back later? If I sleep a little longer, I'll be all right."

"Oh. Sure. You go back to sleep. Shall I wake you later?"

She turned over on her side. "I have a golf date at one. Why don't you set my alarm for 11:30? Maybe we can have a cup of coffee before I go."

I set the alarm and tucked the covers around her. "Sure. Sure, Chris. Hope you feel better." She closed her eyes. "See you later."

It was much later. Chris didn't come by my room before her golf date; neither did she have dinner at the dorm. My exhilaration of the night before had changed to nagging torment. Why was she staying away? What had I said or done? I love you, I love you.

She came to my door long after my roommate had gone to sleep. "Jenny?" I was out of bed in one bound. "Were you asleep?"

I shook my head.

"Come down to my room for a minute." She walked down the hall, her room dark. She reached behind me to close the door and took me in her arms. "Jenny."

I buried my face in her shoulder, forgetting my all-day anguish, forgetting everything but the wonder of being held by Chris. Chris, Chris.

She'd been drinking. She put her hand under my chin to lift my face from her shoulder. Her kiss was not gentle this time. It was hard and sure. Her body tensed against mine, and she kissed me again and again. No hesitation, no trial and error. Gesture after gesture, smooth and certain, like a well-rehearsed play.

I pulled away from her. "Chris." I took her face between my hands. "Chris?"

She tried to bring me close again.

"Chris - do you love me ?"

She turned away from me and switched on her desk lamp. Her short, naturally curly hair was tangled, her lipstick smeared. "Cigarette?"

I took one, and she lighted it for me. As she leaned over I saw that the top button of her blouse was unbuttoned. Whose fingers?

"Chris. You - you haven't answered."

She lighted her own cigarette. "Jenny, I think we ought to talk to Miss Lee."

"Talk to Miss Lee? About what?"

"About us. About you. You said you loved me. I think we ought to talk to Miss Lee."

"I don't understand."

"It's not right, Jenny. This feeling you have for me."

"But, Chris, I love you."

"That's what I mean. You know what Miss Lee said about girls like that. We ought to tell her."

My bewilderment was complete. What did Chris mean? I loved her. It was the most beautiful thing that had ever happened. Didn't she feel this way, too? Hadn't she shown me that she did? What could be wrong with this?

Chris was combing her hair, straightening her clothes - and talking. I caught phrases. "She can help...will know what to do...must tell her."

I was watching her, uncomprehending, nodding numbly because this seemed to be what she wanted. I started down the stairs ahead of her, thinking, Miss Lee will be in bed.

Chris caught my arm and dug her nails into my skin. "This has happened to you before, hasn't it, Jenny?" Her voice was ugly and hard.

"I don't know what you mean."

"With girls. You've done this with other girls. Haven't you, Jenny?" Shrill now.

I uncurled her fingers from my arm. "No, Chris. There hasn't been anybody but you."

It was an explosion. "I don't believe you!"

"We'd better go if we're going to talk to Miss Lee."

Miss Lee was in bed, but she called to us to come in. I only remember some things. I remember that Miss Lee, her hair in curlers and no turban, sat up and turned on her bed lamp. "What is it, girls?"

We sat down on the other twin bed, and Chris said, "We've got to talk to you."

And Chris talked and talked. Her voice went on, low and steady, while Miss Lee, only slightly veiled shock in her eyes, looked first at Chris, then at me.

Then Miss Lee talked. "Often normal, natural...a phase ...appointment with Dr. Stephens...call tonight... don't worry...I'll even explain to Dr. Stephens...so glad you came to me...right thing...don't worry... everything is going to be all right."

And, finally, they were through talking. There wasn't anything left to say.

Miss Lee offerred us cigarettes from her pack.

"No, thanks." My voice was rough at the edges.

Chris took one and lighted Miss Lee's cigarette and then her own. She was smiling at Miss Lee - her slow, special smile. Miss Lee smiled back.

"Is that all?"

Miss Lee looked surprised. "Why, yes, I guess so, Jenny."

"Then I'll go. Goodnight." I stood up.

"I'll let you know about Dr. Stephens."

"Yes. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Jenny." Chris kept her head down. It was an unnecessary gesture. I didn't look at her as I left the room. I walked straight and fast, eyes blank with tears.

It wasn't easy. First love never is. And second?

LESBIANA

BY GENE DAMON

172. IMPERIAL CITY BY ELMER RICE. COWARD, 1937.

A VAST PANORAMIC HYMN TO NEW YORK CITY BY ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST FAMOUS WRITERS. INCLUDES ALL KINDS OF PERSONAL MORALITY INCLUDING, OF COURSE, LESBIANISM.

173. ONE HOUR BY LILLIAN SMITH. HARCOURT, 1959; SIGNET, 1960

ALTHOUGH MAINLY CONCERNED WITH THE THEME OF FALSE ACCUSATION, THIS NOVEL CARRIES A CONVINCING SECONDARY ACCOUNT OF A MOVING AND SYMPATHETIC LOVE AFFAIR BETWEEN A WOMAN CAMP COUNSELOR AND THE HEROINE OF THE NOVEL. THE THEME IS UNDERSTATED, BUT SO VERY WELL PRESENTED AND SO ROMANTICALLY TREATED THAT IT MUST BE HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

174. TELL ME ANOTHER MORNING BY ZDENA BERGER. HARPER, 1961.

THERE IS AN INCIDENTAL LESBIAN ROMANCE INCLUDED IN THIS RATHER TRAGIC, UNDERPLAYED NOVEL ABOUT LIFE IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP DURING WORLD WAR II.

mood miscellanea

CHANGELING

YOU WHO ARE SO ANCIENT-WISE---
EMBERS, ASHES IN YOUR EYES---
    CRUMPLED ON MY ARM TONIGHT
    ARE A CHILD TO SHIELD FROM FRIGHT.

YOU WHO ARE SO STRONG AND FLEET---
SHOULDERS PROUD AND HANDS OF STEEL---
    ARE AS SMALL AND CLINGING-SWEET
    AS A PAIN-SPENT CHILD MIGHT FEEL.

ABIGAIL SANFORD

CRY NOT, FAIR ONE; YOUR THOUGHTS ARE WRONG;
NAUGHT BUT LOVE EXISTS;
IN SHAPE NOT OFTEN WHOLE ENOUGH
AND OFTEN SADLY SICK.

BUT LOVE IS OUR CREATOR, CHILD,
AND LOVE OUR WAY OF LIFE.
THE HORRID ACHES ARE GROWING PAINS;
LOVE'S LEARNING TO RECITE.

N'T CRY, CHILD; DON'T HIDE FROM LOVE
I FEAR OF WHAT IT ASKS OF YOU.
OU ARE NOT MEANT TO BE ALONE;
LOVE SOMEONE; LIFE DEMANDS YOU DO.

VERONICA COB

00:00

IT IS SAID
THERE IS A TIME FOR ALL THINGS
AND ALL THINGS COME IN TIME
AND THE TIME IS NOW
AND WHERE WILL I FIND THE TIME
AND THE TIME CAN BE ENDLESS
AND TIME IS AN ETERNITY
AND THIS TIME WILL BE THE TIME
AND OF THE TIME THERE IS NO MEASURE
AND IF I ONLY HAD THE TIME
AND JUST PASSING THE TIME
AND DO YOU HAVE THE TIME
AND THE TIME WEIGHS HEAVY
AND ONCE UPON A TIME
AND MY TIME IS YOUR TIME
AND ALL THE TIME
AND ANYTIME
AND HELD IN THE HANDS OF TIME
AND NIGHT TIME
AND FUN TIME
AND WHERE DO YOU EVER FIND THE TIME
AND IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME
AND JUST IN TIME
AND TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS
IT IS SAID.

TERRY

Masculine Viewpoint

I am generally elated with the tenor of your group's position at ONE'S 1960-61 Mid-Winter Institute as regards the Homophile "Bill of Rights" issue, and at the same time, signally dismayed by your apparent unconcern for substantially materializing your reasons. Shallying between the GO and NOGO termini of whether to invoke an exchange of correspondence in and around this, I am now of the opinion that a strengthening and broadening of your position is very much an order of the day. My opinion is even more confirmed by the recent abysmal developements in the Mattachine Society II. (THE LADDER, June 1961, page 13.)

Perhaps a word or two of self-identification might be useful. As first founder of the Mattachine Idea, (the "closed" Society I, with its open-face Foundation as opposed to the subsequent "open" Society II), the writer did not associate further with the name after the factional eruptions of May 1953 dissipated the first Society, and gutted the Foundation despite his desperate and vehement opposition. My association with ONE, INC., over the last eight years might loosely be described as that of-more often than not- a loyal opposition. In education, for instance, the writer has up to now agreed with their directions but not with many of their positions and/or postulates.

But now I stand in the very strongest opposition to their Homophile Bill of Rights- not only the position but the very approach and direction! At the moment the core of my protestation is equally compounded by what I deplore as the "red herring" type of rebuttal (yours), instead of a direct and open counter-offensive.

Being unable to attend this year's Institute I have been dependent upon those notes which have been reported by ONE Magazine from time to time. It is possible that in missing your reports (THE LADDER, March, 1961, and subsequent issues) our impressions of your opposition do great disservice to your efforts. But hear me out, and if I do no more than reiterate what you have stated I shall most humbly apologize.

The reason I suspect that your stated opposition contented itself with things less than a coming to grips with the primal error- that of a Bill of Rights specifically favoring ANY minority- is because ONE Magazine's defense seems to have taken shape on deviational levels far from the basic postulates of the conflict. In effect, their rebuttal is one of taunting. "Wassamatta?" they hoot, "after so many years of open publication and yearly open conventions are we to believe that homophiles are afraid to stand up for their rights?" This particular herring, I believe, is in counter to your negative assertion that a statagem such as the Minority Bill of Rights in itself (let alone its projection) would set the homophile movement back many years. I contend that being afraid to stand up for our rights, equally with the fear of "set back", are definitely not the issue in any way, shape or form.

The issue is, in a nutshell, that a Bill of Rights specifically drawn up for any minority (whether political, racial or social) is wholly undemocratic and thus wholly UNAMERICAN. Civil rights, or more correctly in constitutional terms, CIVIL PRIVILEGES , in a Republic engendered upon and devoted to the preservation and constant extension of the democratic processes, are , and must ever BE, INDIVISIBLE. Civil privileges, being both a collective responsibility as well as the individual's benefice, devolve upon the ALL the obligation to apply them to each alike, without reservation, or to none!

Two of ONE Institute's presumed "rights" come to mind vividly exposed in this context: (1)The right of homophiles not to have to pay educational taxes to care for the excessive inseminations of heterophiles; and, (2), the right of homophiles to establish homophile neighborhood concentrations and live in them if they so choose.

In demolishing the latter postulate one need go no further than to note that "restrictive covenants" in the matter of real property are now unconstitutional in most non-Jim Crow states and soon may be the rule in all American States- we hope.

In regard to the first item, the dreadful and divisive character of its concept immediately becomes apparent when we realize that such an equity would protect Protestants from having to pay taxes for the public education of Catholics or Jews; would protect whites from having to pay taxes for the public education of Asians, Amerindians, Mexican-Americans, or Negroes; would protect wealthy employers from having to pay taxes for the public education of unionists; would protect landlords from having to pay taxes for the public education of renters.

As I see it, the planners of ONES Midwinter Institute failed to distinguish between the "political fiction" of the inalienable rights (which are polarities of an elective intellectual climate only), and the political entities (derivative of such a climate) of the conferred civil privilege. They further equated the inalienable right fiction with the "DEMAND tactic" by which a militant minority or faction NEGOTIATES an armed truce to an advantage. The conflicting factors of each of the above propositions should never, under any circumstances, have been presumed to be either equivalents or interchangeables. In terms of everyday political exigencies the popularly current myth of "inalienable rights" is no more than the constantly reiterated posits of our founding fathers' "self-evident truths". As such, then, "inalienable rights" must be seen to be a valid concept ONLY when comprehended as inseparable from "duties owed". All other political sacra are "civil privileges" voluntarily and collectively conferred in convention by the democratic process. And precisely because they are conferred they are equally collectively revocable.

Had ONE Institute seen its project in terms of a "Bill of Particulars", this would have been a horse of quite another shape. A "Bill of Particulars", to encompass a basis of negotiations when the time comes to integrate the homophile minority (as a socially decent and contributive element) into the parent community, is a pro-

jection with which none of us would wish to quarrel. Indeed, a "Bill of Particulars", giving voice and cognizance to the diverse methodological motivations and colorations characterising the provenance of necessary morality within our minority, collated and prepared for extensive discussion and selective public dissemination, might prove to be of significant value to our parent community at this time. Especially so as that community's more sober and serious press currently editorializes on the need to seek a reconstitution of its own all-embracing system of ethic from which to derive a more contemporary manual of moral discipline.

As regards setting brakes on our actions, purportedly in the interests of maintaining fraternal rapport with "friends" in our communities, national or regional, the homophile minority by now should have accrued sufficient political maturity to have dispelled any such illusions. As the brief but messy essay into politics enjoyed by the Mattachine SocietyII so ably demonstrated, and as the negro people have so painfully learned, national and /or social minorities have no friends- other than the infrequent materializations (remorsefully-flashed or conscience-stabbed into temporary or fitful existence) of their fellow-travellers. They do have, from time to time, temporary allies, each motivated by its own (and usually adverse) self-interests.

It is true that there are numerous forces and combinations within our society, some not without considerable influence, who have voiced, and may continue to do so, an interest in our being heard. But we should err disastrously were we to initial them as "friends". When a new political party desires to be put on the ballot it must secure petitions containing a minimum of 50,000 signatures. These signators, by and large, are neither "friends" nor even well-wishers. They are simply earnest or decent people who believe in the democratic principle of fair play; who believe that every sincerely-motivated contender has the right to be heard.

As the progress of the Wolfenden Report from Committee to the floor of Commons in the British Parliament demonstrated, there were many who warmly supported its right

to be debated on the floor precisely in order to vote against it.'

Insofar as our being heard is concerned, we should realize that (in keeping with the experiences of all our predecessors in crusades for social reform) we must set as a basis of negotiations TWO LOAVES in the earnest hope of getting ONE, but settling for HALF as the first step in an inevitable escalation process. In such a negotiation, even as the "Integration" forces of government have discovered and as the emerging nations of Africa and Asia experience with each new day, it will be precisely our "friends", our self-seeking allies of other occasions, who will be the first to moan that even our minimum "half Loaf" is 10 times too much for us to ask- and has been brought up 25 years too soon!

In the matter of a homophile orientation toward the collective obligation to apply civil privilege to each with distinction, the notion inescapably arises that the solution to our problems-not only in the U.S. but in any nation, is a Constitutional one. Concomitant to the notion runs a conviction that such Constitutional privilege/obligations must state their premises in primal homophile values- even as the privilege/obligations, insuring definitive security and status to currently acknowledged and accepted national and social minorities, spell out such securities and limitations in the 13th through 15th Amendments in such a way as to tacitly insure them, equally and specifically, in terms of the first ten.

To be specific in homophile terms, I am firmly convinced that a state-by-state juriprudential insertion of a "mutual consent" clause-even were such a projection practicable-does not solve the contradictions oppressing our minority. I believe that the essential compromising opportunism and negativeness of the "mutual consent" position (as applied to the homophile minority problem) was wholly exposed by the career of the Wolfenden Report and the consequential debate which buried it.

The significant coupling within a "presumably" liberalizing amendment, which our minority editorials here in the U.S. seem to have overlooked, between importuning

and the common garden-variety of homophile contracting for mutual consent, nakedly reveals the startling realization that, to the humanistic English "establishment" (which of course includes the church), the social aspects of PRACTISING homophilia and prostitution are seen as parallel phenomena or procedures!

The categorical grouping cited above, afforded us in the Wolfenden symposium, is to a large extent of our own unwittingness. A doing, I might add, that the writer managed to keep excluded from the First Mattachine Movement but which has flowered all over the place in the Second Mattachine and its affiliates. This grouping inevitably derived from the tendency of eight years or so of "TOLERATION, FOLKS, PRETTY PLEASE?" editorials in our several magazines. These cited, in support of their claims that the level of moral opinion was now liberalizing itself, the numerous addictions to casual adultery presumably now found tolerable within large sections of our national community. Be our common conventions of morality as collapsed nationally or internationally as they may, the fact remains that Occidental jurisprudence still collates ADULTERY as an aspect of PROSTITUTION and, co-axially, prostitution an aspect of adultery.

The homophile minority code, per se, is concerned neither with prostitution nor adultery, and must not be - at least in its initial conceptualizing. Heterophiles certainly have the right to establish an "A - B" morality gamut from (a) conjugal continence to (b) celibacy. But we cannot so tailor our social requirements because, (1) we are neither heterophiles nor, (2) may we expect to accrue the social expectancies, and in return rewards, of heterophiles.

In certain aspects of our inclinational patterns we might appear to parallel heterophile templates, true! But since the homophile social patterns, most liable to accrue the best levels of our social contributions, deviate rather sharply from those attributable to the conventions of heterophile morality, we must dedicate ourselves to the educational task of broadening community morality to honestly assess the necessary requirements of both the heterophile and the homophile.

Granted that the resulting morality must be all-inclusive and indivisible; yet the state and local jurisprudence must contain allowances for PARTICULARS even as are granted religious (such as Christian Scientists, Jehova's Witnesses), national and social (such as trade unions) minorities currently. Such PARTICULARS, in my opinion, more correctly should have been and should be the first concern of the homophile minority publications and conventions of today and tomorrow.

In this direction, a resolute cleansing of our own conceptions and intellectual processes of moral evaluations would seem to be in order. Number one on such a list would be, I think, the rooting out of the mechanical and wholly fallacious habit of comparing and/or evaluating our minority patterns of behavior in terms of heterophile values and/or conventions.

Homophile promiscuity, for example, may not be adumbrated with that form of behavior excoriated by the heterophile community. It does not carry the same connotations of disaster and dissolution with us as it MUST with them, for reasons too obvious to further discuss.

That homophile promiscuity is wasteful of time and energy which might be much more profitably spent is a sentiment not necessary for us to belabor. But immoral, in the spiritual and social criminality of the heterophilic infraction's intent, it is not! Homophile promiscuity, then, simply becomes for us one of our several mean-average deviant behaviors FOR WHICH WE MAKE NO APOLOGIES. Occasional multiplicity of sexual expression, as a casual variation of "otherwise devoted couple" behavior, might be another such. Yet such deviances as these, and others, construed from our minority behavior values cannot in any way be measured or weighed in current heterophilic moral "koine" (or should we say coinage?) because neither the socially-evaluated purposes, nor objectives, of heterophilic sexual behavior were ever construed to correspond with our expectations - or vice versa.

Thus we must realize - all our heterophile sympathizers and fellow-travellers notwithstanding - that without sharing AS HOMOPHILES the indivisible civil privileges of the sanctity of private conscience, the invincibility

of the home, the privileges of free assemblage and territorially-unrestricted association, the privilege of socially-acceptable free speech, that without the privilege of being able to freely assert ourselves as a group and being socially received with the same dignified and decent hospitality extended to any and all other minorities, WE HAVE NOTHING! And until we have begun to consolidate around such a conceptual program, as a minority, we have accomplished nothing!

It is on this latter point where our success or failure swings; it is on this latter point that all the Wolfenden well-meaningism failed, and most surely will founder again. A general bill of "mutual consent when privately enjoyed" is neither gain nor security for us if, at the same time, we are forbidden to seek or associate beyond our front doors. France had just such an unspecified "mutual consent when privately enjoyed" clause for 150 years, generally. And for the same length of time the French homophile lolled in the ennervating illusion that the "double standards" of the bourgeoise-formulated marriage contract applied to him also. So that when, in the last two years, De Gaulle tacked on a specific homophile exclusion clause to certain liberties in this category our minority was not prepared to receive, let alone socially resist, such an onslaught.

A full BILL OF PARTICULARS upon which to negotiate a general liberalization of our national social code, and to amend local or regional "prejudices" currently lodged in criminal equities, reflects no more than the traditional bargaining position of demanding two loaves with the firm conviction to accept no less than one. Although (in small print) half a loaf could be entertained as a "good faith" commitment at the armed truce concluding a first engagement.

But however half-loafey our first temporizings may be, even those initial small gains MUST BE FIRMLY ROOTED, AND COUCHED, IN TERMS OF ACCEPTABLE HOMOPHILE VALUES - or we've achieved NOTHING!

- Henry Hay

READER'S RESPOND

"READERS OF THE LADDER WILL BE INTERESTED IN HEARING COMEDIAN SHELLEY BERMAN'S LATEST ALBUM, THE EDGE OF SHELLEY BERMAN. THE INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE SECOND SIDE CONCERNING GERTRUDE STEIN AND HER RELATIONSHIP WITH ALICE B. TOKLAS ARE REALLY HILARIOUS. IT IS A 'VERVE' RECORD, #MG V-15013."

B. G., MISSOURI

* * * * *

"NEWS OF THE LADDER IS SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE...OUR SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS ON A JOB WELL DONE IN HANDLING A CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT WITH GOOD TASTE AND EXCELLENT MATERIAL."

N. B., NEW MEXICO

* * * * *

"WHAT A WONDERFULLY UNUSUAL STORY IN APRIL'S ISSUE OF THE LADDER, 'NO EXIT,' BY COLLEEN STEIN. POOR MAYOR WREN! LET'S HAVE MORE OF YOUR WORK, MISS STEIN! MANY THANKS."

S. M., CALIFORNIA

* * * * *

"I WONDER HOW MANY READERS OF THE LADDER HAVE HAD THE DESIRE TO INVESTIGATE THE ADVANTAGES OF THE DOB BUT HAVE HESITATED; SOME THROUGH SHYNESS, SOME THROUGH CAUTION, WHILE MANY, PERHAPS, THROUGH SHEER INERTIA? OR, LIKE MYSELF, SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE PUT OUT A TENTATIVE FEELER IN THE FORM OF A LETTER TO THE EDITOR, ONLY TO

HAVE THE DISCONCERTING RESULT OF...SILENCE. OH, YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN SENT THE CURRENT COPY OF THE LADDER AND IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE RIGHT TYPE OF 'COPY' TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

"I WONDER HOW MANY READERS OF THE LADDER HAVE FELT A VERY REAL DESIRE TO HELP WITH THIS WORTHY CAUSE IN BEHALF OF THE OUTCAST HOMOSEXUAL, BUT HAVE HESITATED; SOME THROUGH FEAR OF INVOLVEMENT, SOME THROUGH A SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS, OR AGAIN THROUGH SHEER INERTIA?

"OR, LIKE MYSELF, SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE FELT THAT YOU HAVE SO LITTLE MONEY, SO LITTLE TIME, AND AFTER ALL WHAT CAN ONE MORE PERSON DO?

"IN ANSWER TO MY FIRST QUESTION MAY I GIVE YOU MY EXPERIENCE AS ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE OF YOU WHO MAY BE HESITATING? I DID WRITE TO THE EDITOR OF THE LADDER AND IN ANSWER I GOT ONE OF THE FEW MEDIOCRE COPIES OF THE LADDER AND NO OTHER RESPONSE. BUT I AM OF A PERSISTENT TEMPERAMENT AND SO I TRIED AGAIN. I OFFERRED TO HELP OUT WITH ANY WORK AT THE OFFICE. THAT, OF COURSE, WAS THE RIGHT TACK AND I DID GET A PHONE CALL FROM THE EDITOR. I FOUND OUT THAT THE WORK OF PUTTING TOGETHER THE LADDER EACH AND EVERY MONTH WAS BEING DONE ENTIRELY BY TWO PEOPLE.

"THE REASON FOR SILENCE IN ANSWER TO YOUR FIRST TIMID 'FEELER' IS VERY SIMPLY THE FACT THAT THERE IS NO TIME NOR ENERGY FOR MUCH OF ANYTHING BUT TO KEEP THE LADDER GOING. IT IS ONLY THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF SUCH A SMALL GROUP OF DEDICATED PEOPLE THAT DOB AND THE LADDER SURVIVE.

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"I PERSONALLY WAS SHOCKED RIGHT DOWN TO MY TOES WHEN I REALIZED HOW A FEW PEOPLE WERE KEEPING UP THE GRUELING GRIND OF DAILY JOBS TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES, EVEN AS YOU AND I, AND YET AT NIGHT THEY ALSO MAKE THE ROUNDS OF MEETINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO THE CAUSE, WORK AT THE OFFICE GETTING OUT THE MONTHLY LADDER, DOING ALL THE HEAVY WORK OF DOB AND YET WITH SO LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT.

"THEY HAVE THIS SENSE OF DEDICATION, VERY DEFINITELY, FOR I SAW IT WITH MY FIRST VISIT TO THE DOB OFFICE. BUT EVEN THE MOST EXALTED IDEALS WEAR THIN WHEN YOU ARE DOG-TIRED. SO IF YOU ARE ONE OF THE HESITATERS, WAITING FOR AN ENCOURAGING SIGN, JUST WALK INTO YOUR NEAREST DOB OFFICE AND OFFER YOUR GOOD HELP. YOU CAN DO SOMETHING.

"IN ANSWER TO MY SECOND QUESTION MAY I QUOTE THE MOTTO OF ANOTHER GROUP I BELONG TO: 'IT IS BETTER TO LIGHT ONE LITTLE CANDLE THAN TO CURSE THE DARKNESS.' TO ILLUSTRATE THIS TRUISM, IMAGINE THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL FILLED WITH PEOPLE. IF ONE PERSON LIT A CANDLE, IT WOULD THROW VERY LITTLE LIGHT. BUT IF ALL THE PEOPLE IN THAT BOWL WERE TO LIGHT A TINY LITTLE CANDLE, THE LIGHT WOULD ILLUMINATE THE ENTIRE BOWL.

"THE ANSWER TO OUR PROBLEM IS SO SIMPLE. IF WE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US LIGHT OUR LITTLE CANDLE...NOT ALONE BUT AS A GROUP...IF WE EACH AND EVERY ONE GIVE TO THE WORL AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT A HOMOSEXUAL CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLD, NOT ALONE BUT AS A GROUP. ALONE, IT IS TRUE, WE MAY FALL BY THE WAY. BUT AS A GROUP WE CAN DO ANYTHING ON EARTH. YOU MAY WONDER IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO WIN YOUR PLACE IN SOCIETY. IT MOST CERTAINLY IS, IF YOU DO SO AS A GROUP. DIVIDED, WE CAN BE CONQUERED, BUT UNITED WE MUST SURELY STAND.

"I KNOW THAT EACH AND EVERY HOMOSEXUAL FEELS THAT SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE; THAT A LIFE OF PRETENSE, OR AN ATTITUDE OF 'DON'T GIVE A DAMN' BELLIGERENCE, IS NOT THE ANSWER. YOU HAVE THE PERFECT SOLUTION IN DOB. THEY ARE WORKING FOR YOU AND ARE WAITING TO WELCOME ANYONE WHO NEEDS THEIR HELP. BUT YOU CAN'T SIT ON THE FENCE WAITING FOR SOME MIRACLE TO OCCUR. DON'T FORGET THE LITTLE CANDLE. WHY NOT JOIN YOUR LITTLE LIGHT WITH MINE? IN THAT WAY WE CAN, AT LAST, COME OUT OF THE SHADOWS."

C. D., CALIFORNIA

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THE LADDER: a monthly publication by the DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS, INC., mailed first class in a plain sealed envelope for $4.00 per year.

CONTRIBUTIONS are gratefully accepted from anyone who wishes to contribute in any way. We are a non-profit corporation working entirely on donated labor. Our fees are not of such amounts as to allow for wide dispersion of the publication. While men may not become members of the DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS, INC., many have expressed interest in our efforts and our publication and have made contributions to further our work. Of course, anyone over 21 years of age may subscribe to THE LADDER.

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